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November 11, 1952

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MEMORANDUM

To: CIA - Mr. Kent  
G-2 - Col. Lillard  
ONI - Capt. Reed  
D/I USAF Col. Thomas  
JIG - Capt. Hollbrook

From: OIR - Allan Evans *AE*

Subject: NIE-78

I transmit herewith for your consideration prior to the agency representatives' meeting Friday, December 12, a draft we have prepared which we offer as an alternative for the current draft of NIE-78. We hope this draft will make clear the issues we wish to present for discussion at the meeting.

The basis of our formulation is the idea that intelligence cannot for so long a period as ten years forecast the intention and capabilities of the US. Present plans may provide some guides to development of US capabilities over the next five years or so, but for the following years of the period it is beyond the competence of intelligence to guess at national policy except in terms of alternatives. These alternatives would have to be of such diversity as to bewilder a reader. We therefore feel that the element of relative capabilities, to say nothing of USSR reaction to external US policies, must be omitted from NIE-78. The consequence is that the scope of the paper is limited as shown.

Secondly, it will be observed that the substance of our draft differs considerably from that of the ONE draft. In effect the ONE draft establishes a norm in Part I, "Projection of Present Trends," and in Part II, "Possible New Developments", suggest certain events which might distort this "normal" prospect. Our draft indicates instead that some of these unhappy events are not exceptions but are likely logical consequences of the present foreign situation, and should therefore form part of the general projection. The result is a rather more gloomy picture, given, that is, the limiting omission of possible future changes in US action.

OIR:AllanEvans:jc:12-11-52

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**PROPOSED ALTERNATE DRAFT OF NIE-78**

**December 11, 1952**

**ESTIMATE OF FOREIGN INTENTIONS AND CAPABILITIES  
AFFECTING LIKELIHOOD OF GENERAL  
WAR OVER THE FORTHCOMING DECADE**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. The likelihood of general war over the forthcoming decade will depend upon the whole range of both foreign and US intentions and capabilities. This paper cannot appraise US intentions and capabilities and will, therefore, only constitute an estimate of certain of the factors which will condition that likelihood. These factors are treated under I and B, below, with respect to the purposes and capabilities of both the Eastern and Western (exclusive of the US) power blocs. An attempt is then made, under II, to draw appropriate conclusions concerning the subject of this estimate.

Clearly, however, it would not be possible to treat the US as an absolute vacuum in a projection of this sort. An implicit assumption has been made, therefore, of no drastic change in certain US intentions and capabilities. This assumption is patently unrealistic; US policy and power would almost certainly alter in an attempt to influence the changing foreign intentions and capabilities projected in this report. This paper must, therefore, be taken as an estimate not so much of future international developments as of the foreign trends with which US policy will have to deal in seeking to shape those developments.

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## CONCLUSIONS

### 2. Capabilities.

(a) East. The Soviet bloc's military, economic, and probably its political power will continue to grow in relation to its present purposes. Certain weaknesses may develop, however, as a consequence of the difficulty of managing so vast a system from the top and the rigidity which results from this enormous concentration of power. The possibility of rifts between the USSR and Communist China cannot be excluded.

(b) West. The West has a greater economic base, but lacks the political will to use these resources to increase its power in the same degree as the Soviet bloc. Western Europe's military power will probably increase moderately during the period of this estimate; its political and economic situation will probably not alter greatly. The under-developed areas are undergoing deep-seated social, political, and economic changes which will enhance the possibility of their succumbing to disorder and/or growing Communist influence throughout the next decade.

### 3. Intentions.

(a) Initiation of War. Assuming, as seems probable, that the Soviet Bloc does not attain decisive military superiority, its deliberate initiation of general war seems unlikely, except as the Kremlin might consider this necessary to avert what it regarded as an imminent threat to the Bloc's security.

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(b) Risk of War. The Kremlin probably expects that political trends in the under-developed areas adverse to the West will, in conjunction with basic weaknesses in Western Europe, eventually secure Soviet predominance over Eurasia. It would probably be prepared, where feasible, to counter with force Western attempts to halt this process by military means in countries on the Communist periphery (e.g., US armed intervention in Indochina or Iran). Nor will it be deterred from the continued prosecution of policies designed to accelerate this process by the fact that it may judge them to involve a growing risk of war.

(c) Miscalculation. In the circumstances and atmosphere that are expected to prevail through the period of this estimate, the strong possibility exists that general war may occur as the unwanted result of an unwinding chain of action and reaction, whose final consequence neither side foresaw in initially determining its actions.

A. Eastern Bloc

4. Purposes. The existing hostility of the Soviet Bloc toward the Western nations headed by the US will almost certainly continue. The Communists accept the possibility of periods of stalemate, and from time to time, as a tactical maneuver, they may bring about a temporary relaxation of tensions. They do not, however, accept the possibility of general settlement with the West. Soviet goals through the period of this estimate will

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include, as indistinguishable elements of the same thing, the maintenance of their own power base, the extension of their power throughout Eurasia, and the promotion of world Communist revolution.

5. Military Capabilities. The Bloc will acquire a stockpile of atomic, and probably thermonuclear, weapons more than sufficient, if delivered on targets, to destroy the war-making potential of the West. The USSR will greatly improve its present capacity of delivering these weapons. The USSR will greatly improve its defenses against air attack. The Bloc will maintain at least the present level of conventional armaments. It seems unlikely that, during the period of this estimate, the Soviet Bloc or the West will achieve a clear position of decisive military preponderance, although the possibility that sudden technological advances will invalidate this prediction cannot be excluded. The Kremlin will thus probably continue to view general war as a gamble, whose outcome cannot be predicted. It will also presumably be moved by growing East-West unconventional capabilities progressively to raise its estimate of the destruction that even a victorious war would involve for the USSR.

6. Economic Capabilities. The Bloc economy will expand. It will be able simultaneously to support further capital expansion, increased military production, and increased production of consumers' goods.

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7. Political Capabilities.

(a) The Soviet Union's political cohesion and monolithic discipline will probably be maintained. Any changes in the top leadership will most likely be accomplished without detriment to Soviet strength and without change in Soviet purposes.

(b) The Chinese Communist regime will remain in firm control of mainland China, and will develop a Soviet-type state and society. The probability is that mutual dependence and mutual hostility to the West will keep the Sino-Soviet alliance intact. Nevertheless, the possibility exists that conflicts of aims and interests may eventually cause Peiping to play a role that is increasingly independent of Kremlin influence.

(c) The European satellites will probably remain firmly under the control of the USSR. This relationship may possibly become an increasingly costly one, however, in terms of mutual strains and stresses, which would reduce the satellites' net contribution to Soviet strength.

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### B. The Western Bloc

8. Introduction. Both the strength and weaknesses of the Western bloc arise out of its greater diversity. That diversity makes it necessary to treat this bloc from the standpoint of its component elements, rather than as an over-all entity.

9. Under-Developed Areas. The stability of the under-developed areas has recently been shaken by deep-seated changes. Emerging nationalistic groups have gained power in much of South and Southeast Asia, are coming to power in Latin America and the Middle East, and are struggling for power with growing effectiveness in North Africa. Governments formed by these groups may initially seek to satisfy their followers by taking action against foreign scapegoats. Eventually, however, their followers will demand economic and social improvements. Such of these new governments as are able to execute those improvements successfully may well create a new basis for political and economic stability. Other new regimes, failing in this execution, may feel compelled to adopt ever more radical and nationalistic policies, and to maintain themselves in power by an increasing resort to totalitarian methods. Considerable instability may be expected to characterize this process and a danger will exist, in certain countries, of disorder and of growing Communist influence.

The country where that danger now seems most likely to reach critical proportions is Iran. A Communist take-over in Iran would eventually jeopardize the continued existence of non-Communist governments in neighboring Arab states. The possibility that countries in other

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areas will also become similar danger spots is real and is likely to grow.

A danger of a rather different sort exists in Indochina where, even in the absence of new Communist aggression, an eventual Viet Minh victory is a major possibility. Such a victory would probably result in the eventual loss of most mainland Southeast Asia and would worsen prospects for non-Communist stability in the Indian subcontinent.

10. Western Europe and Japan. The prevalence of disorder and the growing desire for economic independence in under-developed areas, as well as the accession of large agricultural regions to the Communist bloc, have combined to make Western Europe and Japan dependent, to an unprecedented degree, on primary imports from US and Canada. In view of the limited ability of Western Europe and Japan to earn dollars in North America or third areas, this dependence has resulted in a large and apparently chronic dollar deficit. This deficit is now largely met by various types of US military expenditures abroad, which enable Japan and Western Europe to balance their accounts by selling military goods and services for dollars.

Failing a drastic enhancement of Europe's productivity, a large increase in the under-developed countries' export of primary commodities, or a greatly increased availability of US non-governmental dollars to the rest of the world, this underlying deficit will probably persist through the period of this estimate. None of these favorable developments can be foreseen on the basis of present trends and policies.

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One must, therefore, expect that Western Europe and Japan will remain vulnerable to economic crises, will probably continue to be dependent on US aid, will press for increased East-West trade, and will engage in increasingly tense trade competition among themselves. This will not, however, prevent a continuing increase in Western production and productive capacity. Although this increase will be at a slower rate than in the Soviet bloc, the West will retain an absolute superiority over the Bloc in these respects.

Japan's rearmament will be hindered by the economic problem described above. Attainment of a Japanese military posture which could do more, together with US air and naval forces, than assure the defense of the home islands is difficult to envisage, at least in the years immediately ahead. Over the longer run, a somewhat greater Japanese military effort is a possibility. On the basis of such an effort, the Japanese might possibly try to play an independent role in East Asia by playing off the US, the USSR, and Communist China against each other.

European economic problems combine with underlying political and social factors to make it doubtful that, in the absence of decisive developments in regard to unconventional weapons, Western Europe will be rendered defensible against a full-scale Soviet attack in the period of this estimate. It seems more probable, barring the eventuality of full-scale German rearmament referred to later, that the NATO build-up will taper off at a level that

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would do no more than render a Soviet conquest of Europe fairly costly.

Western Europe's continuing vulnerability to full scale Soviet attack will not cause any drastic change in its present internal condition and external orientation. However, Europe's continuing political and economic weakness will be a major and perhaps growing limitation on its ability to contribute to the attainment of US objectives during the period of this estimate. It is unlikely, but possible, that public order and morale in France and Italy will decline to the point where Communist elements will come to power.

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The long-run trend in West Germany is likely to be dynamic and expansive -- perhaps even irredentist. A German military contribution greater than now projected would, however, encounter serious objections, especially by French. If these objections were over-ridden, an intensifying Franco-German diplomatic and military rivalry might eventually induce the French to bring their forces back from Indochina.

If a full utilization of German resources for military purposes should be effectively executed, the NATO-West German forces might eventually attain the capability of defending most of Western Europe. There would then probably be an increasing West German desire to build up greater NATO forces and to press the USSR to surrender its control over East Germany and the lost eastern territories.

## II. Effect of Foreign Intentions and Capabilities on Likelihood of Global War.

11. Deliberate Initiation of War. If, as indicated under I, the Soviet bloc does not achieve a clear preponderance of military power during the period of this estimate, the Kremlin will probably not deliberately initiate general war, unless it believes this necessary to avert an imminent threat to its security. It seems improbable, in view of what has been said under I, that the West will be able to generate sufficient military power to pose such a threat. However, the Soviet leaders are demonstrably suspicious of the West. They profess to believe that the West will attack them in a final desperate effort to save the capitalist system. They may misinterpret Western actions. They might precipitate global war because they believed that a Western

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attack impended and was unavoidable when such was not in fact the case. The possibility of such Soviet action would probably be increased by large scale rearmament in West Germany or by any other impending development which the Kremlin thought likely to lead to an irreversible adverse shift in the balance of East-West power.

12. Acceptance of Risk of War. The Kremlin will be willing to take whatever action it considers necessary to maintain existing Communist regimes in power in the USSR, the European satellites (excluding Albania), and China, regardless of the risk of general war involved. Western moves that threatened to extinguish Communist power in North Korea or Indochina would probably be met by external Communist military counter-action, to the limit of Communist capabilities.

If the Soviet rulers do not consider themselves forced by Western moves to choose between a greater resort to force and some kind of retreat, they will probably continue an opportunistic prosecution of the cold war. They probably believe that the West cannot indefinitely contain, much less satisfy, the aspirations of emerging groups in the underdeveloped countries, and that consequent instability will sooner or later bring Communism to power in an increasing number of these countries. They probably expect that this accession will, together with internal weaknesses and external divisions, eventually undermine the resistance of Western Europe to Communist pressure and subversion. They will not be anxious to expose their power base to the increasingly destructive

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( power of unconventional weapons merely in order to accelerate this process.

On the other hand, they undoubtedly view some external Communist action as an indispensable catalyst to completion of this process, and they will not be deterred from its execution by the fact that it involves major risks. They will be the more ready to assume these risks when they believe that their action is required to offset or frustrate a major gain in the Western power position.

13. Miscalculations. Global war can also arise through a miscalculation by either side, leading to a series of actions and counter-actions that neither side would have started if it had expected this to develop into general war. The danger of such a miscalculation is maximized by the fact that ideological differences and the Iron Curtain prevent normal relations between the Bloc and the West and impede the access of correct information about the West to the Bloc.

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~~Approved For Release 2000/08/29 : CIA-RDP79S01011A000800040004-4~~

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION		REGISTRY
SOURCE		CIA CONTROL NO. 75804
OTR		DATE DOCUMENT RECEIVED 11 Dec. 52
DOC. NO. NIE-78		LOGGED BY AH
DOC. DATE 11 Dec. 52		
COPY NO. 1		
NUMBER OF PAGES 12		
NUMBER OF ATTACHMENTS none		

REFERRED TO		RECEIVED		RELEASED		SEEN BY	
OFFICE	SIGNATURE	DATE	TIME	DATE	TIME	NAME AND OFFICE SYMBOL	DATE
OAD/NE	[Redacted]	" "		" "		[Redacted]	12 Dec
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Lec 1330		Lec 1345	-		
Rdy Rm	[Redacted]	Dec 1345		53	1318		
25X1A	25X1A					25X1A	
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